

South Africa is increasingly becoming a parentless society!

 By [Antoinette Pombo](#)

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Poverty, urbanisation, an increase in divorce rates and premature death, primarily due to HIV/AIDS, has resulted in a significant void in parental support in many South African households.

According to 2010 research by Union for African Population Studies, 38.7% of South African adolescents have at least one parent absent in their household. Almost 2% of these adolescents are not enrolled in school.

But there's another form of parental absenteeism emerging that we should all be concerned about...

New-age parenting is creating a new form of parental-absenteeism

Twenty-first parenting demands that parents learn to juggle their career ambitions, personal desires and parental obligations in a fast-paced, highly competitive environment.

The result?

Even when family units consist of mom and dad, parents are mostly absent from their children's lives. Parents can no longer afford to take time off work to watch Tommy's rugby matches and Sally's ballet when they're attending dozens of meetings every week, working late, trying to run the household, keeping fit at the gym and squeezing in the odd social.

Whether parental absence happens because of the death of a parent or because there's just not enough time to be a real family anymore, there are serious consequences to the emerging child-led society South Africa is becoming!

The long-term effects of parental absenteeism are not pretty

According to a number of studies, children who feel unloved tend to become anxious and insecure. This may make it difficult for them to form relationships, handle stressful situations and results in low self-esteem.

This can ultimately influence if a child abuses alcohol and drugs or suffers mental health problems.

This problem affects people from all walks of life in South Africa...

A third of all hospital admissions in South Africa are related to alcohol abuse. Birth defects linked to alcohol consumption are 141% times higher than in the US.

Trax research by Youth Dynamix shows that 83% of young adults in SA agree that young people use drugs, 89% of teens are having sex and 81% of teens drink alcohol.

Three of the top reasons young people say they're drinking, taking drugs and having sex include:

- Peer pressure
- Escapism from hardships, stress and pressure
- Lack of parental support

What can parents do to ensure their children don't feel alienated?

Don't assume that school provides everything your child needs for his development. Parental support and involvement is critical to a child's development and well-being.

Prioritise your involvement in your child's life. If you can't get to matches and extra mural activities during the week, make a real effort to go support your child on weekends.

Make optimal use of the time you do have with your children. Keep in touch with them through the day, call them when they're back from school, when you get home discuss homework and talk about how they spent the day.

For smaller children, don't overlook quantity. A younger child needs more time with their parents. With older children, focus on quality but be sure to understand what quality means to them. Don't plan activities your child doesn't enjoy. And remember, quality time is about being present physically and mentally.

Understand the youth of South Africa with the Trax Reports

Get in-depth insights on the new-age youth in South Africa, understand who they really are and how this affects your brand. Enquire about the Trax Reports by emailing Andrea Kraushaar at Youth Dynamix (YDx) at info@ydx.co.za.

ABOUT ANTOINETTE POMBO

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